

LWVGT Calendar 2007

SEPTEMBER

September 1

**Local Dues to
Lynne Richardson**

September 25

Board Meeting

5:15 p.m.

United Way Building

OCTOBER

October 2

Luncheon Meeting

Noon

Location TBA

October 23

Board Meeting

5:15 p.m.

United Way Building

October 30

**Fifth Tuesday Social and
Membership Drive Party**

5:15 p.m.

Celeste Burnum's

NOVEMBER

November 6

Luncheon Meeting

Noon

Location TBA

November 27

Board Meeting

5:15 p.m.

United Way Building

DECEMBER

December 4

Luncheon Meeting

Noon

Location TBA

Coordinator's Column

Anna Singer

August–October, 2007

The academic and League year is gearing up, keeping everyone very busy. The board orientation (and board meeting) on July 8 at Hattie Kaufman's house. A make-up meeting followed our August luncheon meeting. Thanks to Annette Dudgeon for organizing and conducting both so ably.

SCHOOLS

In July, the luncheon speaker was Kathy Kinslow, a doctoral candidate in education, who is doing a study of "unitary status" in our school system among others. She reported that the result of such reorganizations is economic segregation, resulting in many cases in racial/ethnic segregation as it seems to have in Tuscaloosa city.

We followed up at the luncheon meeting on August 4 with a talk by Tulane Duke, retired teacher and principal, and current city school board member. She insisted that segregation was not a goal of the recent rezoning, and that western cluster schools were getting extra help to meet No Child Left Behind and other goals. On August 8, the *Tuscaloosa News* reported that all our western schools were in failing mode, and that Central High's graduation rate was 46 percent, as compared with 77 percent and 87 percent at the city's white-majority high schools.

Our September luncheon meeting was devoted to an open discussion, led by school veterans Kathy Byrd and Annette Dudgeon, about what the League's response should be to what we all agreed was a crisis. (LWVGT has long had a position supporting school desegregation, adequate funding, and full public access to school-system meetings). The suggestion that appealed most was for LWVGT to re-adopt Central High School, which had been our project when our member Scarlett Gaddy was teaching there. This suggestion will appear on our September board agenda, after which we refine the activities we might engage in.

IMMIGRATION

LWVUS has asked that local and state leagues report consensus on immigration by January 2008. Kathy Byrd has been organizing our response to this, and details about the

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consensus appear elsewhere in this *Voter*. The luncheon speaker on October 2 will be Danny Lemley, a local attorney with extensive experience in immigration issues. November and December will be devoted to reaching our local consensus.

ALABAMA CITIZENS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM DINNER

The board voted to send Kathy Byrd to last month's annual Bailey Thomson dinner, as a gesture of our support both of ACCR's goals and our member, Kristi Thomson, Bailey's widow.

LUNCHEON MEETING VENUES

We have happily met for years at the University Club, but have been uncomfortable with recent changes in the Club's rules about meetings. In particular, we can no longer just show up, but must make firm reservations; this has been difficult to implement. The membership at the September 4 meeting agreed to try meeting at another venue, and notice will be sent shortly about the October meeting.

A SPECIAL WELCOME BACK

After some years of needing to be at home full time, member, former president, (and former LWVAL president) Juanita Watson has been able to join us again at luncheon meetings. We welcomed her with applause at the September 4 meeting!

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE PARTY AND FIFTH TUESDAY

We will end the month of October with a Fifth Tuesday and combine it with our annual membership party. The latter is usually a wine-and-cheese, but this time we'll treat ourselves and potential members to our best pot-luck supper efforts, again at the home of our generous member, Celeste Burnum. Bring friends who have an interest in League! And, of course, your favorite dish.

LWVGT Dues Are Due

Lynne Richardson
Treasurer

The Tuscaloosa League's fiscal year begins September 1, 2007. Dues will be due at that time. Dues remain \$50 for an individual and \$25 for a second person in the same household.

You may pay your dues at a regular meeting or by mail to the treasurer: Lynne Richardson, 6029 73rd Place East, Cottondale, Al 35453.

New Member Adena Whitman

Toby Whitman
Membership Chair

We have been fortunate to gain new members for our chapter this past year. Most of us have known each other for a very long time and are well acquainted with our positions on issues. This first article, in what I hope will be an ongoing series, is an opportunity to learn how our most recent members view LWVGT. The questions were mine, the responses of Adena Whitman are not edited.

In your view, what does League stand for?

The League is an important force in the political arena, cutting through the clutter and enabling the general public to see the issues and the politicians' views. People are fed up with politicians and their non-issue-oriented double-speak. The League needs to be a more visible presence in order to help the general public understand what is being said and then make informed decisions when voting.

What issues would you like to see addressed?

I would like to see an increase in educating young people about how their opinions and their votes matter. There has been a disconnect between what young people view and what they think they can affect. Perhaps the League can show them that their opinions count and something as simple as one vote can make a huge difference in how the future is shaped.

What would you change about League if you could?

I'm not sure I know enough yet to say I would make changes. Check back with me in about six months!

Education Matters

Kay Ellis

The August and September luncheon programs of the League concerned the Tuscaloosa City School Board's projected plans for the relocation of particular grades in the city schools over the next few years. Opponents and proponents of the plan both have valid concerns.

At the August luncheon meeting, Tulane Duke outlined the Board's plan and led a discussion of its pros and cons. Some participants believe that its implementation would improve the quality of education, perhaps increase the graduation rate. Others emphasized the value of neighborhood schools. For some there is fear that the system may return to court control.

In September, Kathy Byrd, Annette Dudgeon and Anna Singer reviewed the League's positions on education, emphasizing equal access to quality education, financial support by taxpayers, and opportunities for taxpayer input.

QUALITY EDUCATION

What do we mean by quality education? Different students have different needs. What does the graduation rate say about quality education? How can a student go to school 12 years and not graduate? How do we motivate children to go to college?

TAXPAYER INPUT

Some members reported that "open" school board meetings may be held at inconvenient times, and that, even then, there is little opportunity for input; that the administration doesn't listen. Participants were warned not to impugn the motives of the Board.

All in all, it was agreed that there are many questions and few answers.

Voter Registration

Betty Simonetti

This year we will concentrate on registration and re-registration. You can all assist by providing us with the name of the person in your place of employment, church, etc who is responsible for new employees or new members. Contact Betty Simonetti at 556-6945 or etsimonetti@bellsouth.net.

Update on Immigration Study

Kathy Byrd

The LWVGT voted at the 2007 annual meeting to participate in the national study and development of a LWVUS consensus on immigration. Our October 2 speaker, Danny Lemley, is a local attorney who deals with immigration law. He will speak on legislation related to the immigration issue. In November, Kathy Byrd will speak on issues related to the consensus. We will then work together on the consensus questions, which are due to the national League on February 1st, 2008. This means we have a busy fall ahead of us.

Although many aspects of this complicated issue will be discussed during the months ahead, members are asked to familiarize themselves in preparation for consensus taking. The easiest way is to log on to the LWVUS website at www.lwv.org.

The website will provides instructions on how to access the information on the immigration study, including the consensus questions themselves as well as discussion questions for use during the consensus process. If you have problems accessing the website or do not have access to the Internet, contact Kathy Byrd at 758-2137 or kcbyrd@aol.com, and she will get you a copy of the questions. The website may ask for your member number so you can log on. If you do not know that number, contact Kathy or our treasurer, Lynne Richardson, at 556-4951 or elsies@dbtech.net.

The website provides the following excellent information:

- Eight Background Papers
 1. Economic Aspects of Authorized and Unauthorized Immigration
 2. Effects of Global Interdependence on Migration
 3. Immigration and the Economy
 4. Immigrants: Diversity and Inclusion
 5. Overview: Federal Immigration Policy and Proposed Reforms
 6. What Motivates Immigration to America?
 7. U. S. Immigration Policy: Family Reunification
 8. Federal Immigration Policy: Enforcement Issues
- Consensus Questions
- U.S. Immigration: A Historical Perspective

This article written by a committee member appeared in the February 2007 issue of *The National Voter*.
- Immigration Study Briefs

The one-page summaries are based on the longer background articles listed above, which were written by committee members. These shorter summary articles can be distributed as handouts at public meetings as well as at consensus meetings. The first two appeared in the June 2007 issue of *The National Voter* and the last two will be included in the October 2007 issue of *The National*

Voter. All four articles are also available on the website:

Brief # 1 – Global Interdependence and Migration

Brief # 2 – Immigration: Impact on U.S. Economy

Brief # 3 – Border Enforcement

Brief # 4 – Family Reunification and Diversity Policies

Membership Drive and Party

Toby Whitman

Membership

This October we are combining our annual Membership Drive Party and a Fifth Tuesday social get-together at Celeste Burnum's beautiful home. It is scheduled to begin at 5:15 p.m., Tuesday, October 30, at 4 Monnish Drive.

Please forward to me, within the next couple of weeks, names of people you would like to invite to join League. It would help if you would verbally invite them and then we will follow up with written invitations. Thanks in advance for your prompt help. We are looking forward to a rousing good time as well as recruiting new members.

Contact me at tobela4314@comcast.net, 553-6377, or 4314 Woodland Forrest Drive, Tuscaloosa, AL 35405.

Observer Corps Important to LWVGT Mission

Annette Dudgeon

My new hat this year is to chair a League of Women Voters of Greater Tuscaloosa Observer Corps. I have been remiss and have yet to get anything definite set up, but I would like to share a few thoughts and request help.

A local observer corps is one of the most important functions of a local League. It lets the government entities know we care and that we are watching. Most of the time an observer corps fosters good relationships and this helps when we want something. Government and board officials get to know the observers.

Currently the Tuscaloosa Neighborhoods Together group is doing an outstanding job of observing and sending detailed notes and e-mails on the Tuscaloosa City Council, the city planning and zoning boards, and the city board of education. It would not hurt, though, if we were present also, with large name tags showing—especially given the present city school situation.

To my knowledge, no one is observing the Tuscaloosa County Commission or Tuscaloosa County Board of Education meetings, and that may be where we need to start.

I hope to obtain a schedule of meeting times for all the boards and governmental entities in our county. Perhaps from that list we can find several other places where we need to be present. The Birmingham league is observing a board that recommends board members for other appointed boards and agencies in Jefferson County. I don't know if our county has such a board, but the idea is intriguing.

If you are interested in observing a meeting for the League (it would only be once or twice a month) let me know: jdudgeon11@aol.com, 758-4604, or 454-7824.